

**Children's Bureau
Child and Family Services Reviews
Conference Call Planning Guidelines**

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**Prepared by the Child Welfare Review Project
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The Child Welfare Review Project, managed for the Children's Bureau by JBS International, Inc., supports the Children's Bureau and Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office staff in planning conference calls for the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). Below are the guidelines for scheduling (Conference Call Logistics) and facilitating (Conference Call Focus) up to eight calls per State review. The eight calls include five review planning calls and three Program Improvement Plan (PIP) calls.

Conference Call Logistics

Each spring before the next fiscal year in which the CFSRs are conducted, the Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau to schedule an initial conference call with the ACF Regional Office and State child welfare agency staff responsible for the CFSRs to be conducted during that fiscal year. During that call, the Child Welfare Review Project will alert ACF Regional Office staff that the project will send a master schedule of review planning calls to them in June.

The Child Welfare Review Project then will schedule each conference call and send an e-mail notification to call participants approximately 1 week before the call. The project will request from the ACF Regional Office lead a list of the names and e-mail addresses of Children's Bureau, National Resource Center (NRC), and State agency staff, including representatives from the largest metropolitan area, if possible, who will participate in the calls. National Review Team members also will receive notification by e-mail each Friday of all review planning conference calls scheduled for the following week.

Conference Call Focus

The following is intended to provide general guidance for the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff with regard to the topics that should be discussed with State agency staff during the review planning process.

ACF Regional Office staff are encouraged to develop an agenda for each review planning conference call, adapting the information provided below to meet the needs of the State being reviewed.

Conference Calls Number 1–5: Review Planning

Conference Call Number 1

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children’s Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule this call 9 months before the onsite review. During this call, the Children’s Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Provide an overview of the review process and timelines, and encourage the State staff to visit the Children’s Bureau Web site and read the *Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual* and other review-related materials. Encourage the State to begin preparing for the reviews, particularly to establish a process for managing the Statewide Assessment.
2. Provide an overview of the changes from the first round of reviews; for example, the automation of the review instruments, sample size, collaboration, and notification of State chief justices regarding the upcoming review.
3. Provide an overview of the roles of the Children’s Bureau, the Children’s Bureau data team, and ACF Regional Office staff throughout the review process, including explaining who will be involved in various review planning activities and the process for reviewing CFSR-related documents and providing feedback to the State.
4. Introduce the JBS Child Welfare Review/State Team Training Project staff, who will provide an overview of their roles in supporting the reviews, including assisting the Children’s Bureau in managing the reviews; providing training to State Review Team members about the onsite review; training consultant reviewers and managing their participation in the reviews; and sending Review Information Packages to the Review Team members.
5. Inform the State staff that the Children’s Bureau will forward to them the State data profiles, and ask the State data staff to: (1) present issues pertaining to the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) or other State information system(s), (2) discuss potential problems with the State Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) submissions, and (3) address possible alternate sources of data (in the absence of NCANDS). Tell the State that the Children’s Bureau will provide updated data when they begin planning their PIP, as necessary.
6. Collect contact information for key State personnel managing the reviews.
7. Inform the State staff about the type of information they will need to submit before the review (for example, the Statewide Assessment and State policies related to the reviews) and tools available to assist them in this process (for

example, the Statewide Assessment Instrument and the State Policy Submission Form).

8. Inform the State that Federal regulation requires that the State make public the Statewide Assessment, Final Summary of Findings, and PIP. Encourage the State to develop a plan to respond to requests for this information. Tell the State that the ACF Office of Public Affairs will respond to requests for information regarding the CFSRs.
9. Identify and explain to the State the period under review for the data submissions and for the onsite review, and identify the sampling period for the onsite review.
10. Encourage the State staff to begin thinking about the composition of the State Review Team that will participate in the Statewide Assessment, including external partners, and remind them that they will need to submit names and contact information for those individuals the following month (8 months before the onsite review date). Inform the State that it is helpful to have overlapping membership among the Statewide Assessment, Onsite Review, and PIP Development Teams to facilitate cross-review-phase experiences and information sharing. Moreover, the Statewide Assessment Team members will be key participants in the early PIP planning that begins immediately after the Statewide Assessment is completed.
11. Inform the State that cross-State participants may take part in the onsite review of the State; the purpose of their involvement is to provide them with an opportunity to experience the onsite review process.
12. Identify challenges that either the ACF Regional Office staff or the State anticipates experiencing with regard to the review.
13. Discuss which NRCs were involved with the State during previous CFSR and PIP processes, and the possible State needs for continued technical assistance during the upcoming review. Identify the types of technical assistance available from the NRCs, and ask the State staff to be prepared to discuss their technical assistance needs during the next call.
14. Remind the State staff that they can use title IV-E funding to support the review and PIP planning activities.
15. Answer the State staff's questions.
16. Discuss actions that should be taken before the next conference call.

Between conference calls 1 and 2, the following will take place:

1. The Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff, and representatives of the NRC for Child Welfare Data and Technology, as appropriate, will consult with

the State regarding specific data issues and identify any need for data resubmission or for alternate sources of data.

2. The State will transmit an alternate source of data to the Children's Bureau for use in preparing the State data profile, if necessary, and will identify the State members of the Review Team who will participate in the Statewide Assessment (8 months before the onsite review).
3. The Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff should consider scheduling interim calls with all or selected participants in preparation for the transmission of the data files. These calls will be managed by the ACF Regional Office and are in addition to the calls facilitated by the Child Welfare Review Project.
4. The Children's Bureau will send the data profiles to the ACF Regional Office staff who provide training/orientation on the Statewide Assessment to the State team (7 months before the onsite review).
5. The ACF Regional Office staff will transmit the data profiles and Statewide Assessment Instrument to the State, determine whether it would be appropriate to include a Children's Bureau data person and a representative of the NRC for Child Welfare Data and Technology in the second conference call, and inform the Child Welfare Review Project regarding any additional participants for the call.
6. The ACF Regional Office staff will follow up with the State if particular technical assistance needs were identified, make a referral to the appropriate NRC, and determine whether a representative of the NRC should participate in the next conference call. The ACF Regional Office staff will send electronically to the State the chart outlining the review-related technical assistance available during the review and the PIP process.
7. The State staff will develop a plan for responding to requests for the release of the Statewide Assessment, Final Summary of Findings, and PIP.

Conference Call Number 2

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule this call at least 6 months before the onsite review and shortly after transmission of the data profiles to the State by the Children's Bureau. During this call, the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Summarize the key discussion points from any interim calls that have taken place since the last full conference call.
2. Provide time for the Child Welfare Review Project staff to discuss review planning arrangements, including preferred hotel accommodations in the major metropolitan area that accept the Federal Government room rate set by the General Services Administration (GSA) (the other sites will be selected

approximately 2 months before the onsite review). Also, ask the State staff about the following issues regarding the review:

- a. Special language needs
 - b. Transportation issues
 - c. State demographics that may necessitate a specific diversity among consultants chosen to supplement the Federal Review Team
3. Discuss the data profiles.
4. Revisit the process for conducting the Statewide Assessment presented by Federal staff during the first call, address data quality issues and missing data elements, and discuss the need to resubmit the data used for the review.
5. Ask the State to discuss their plans for conducting the Statewide Assessment, including the following:
 - a. the stakeholders they plan to engage in supporting or contributing to that process
 - b. the involvement of external representatives, including how the State will collaborate with the courts, tribes, and youth
 - c. a date for the State to submit a draft of the Statewide Assessment for review and comment by the team leaders
6. Discuss State policies that may have an impact on the review process, such as alternative response. Discuss any barriers that may exist in accessing adoption cases for review. Remind the State to complete the State Policy Submission Form.
7. Address the State's technical assistance needs, follow up on earlier referrals for technical assistance, and develop a strategy for coordinating the provision of technical assistance if multiple technical assistance providers are involved.
8. Remind the State to submit its plan for responding to requests for information on the CFSRs (for example, from the public).
9. Discuss review site selection and criteria, including local quality assurance case review results, other relevant data, and timeframes. Schedule a date by which the sites will be selected. Discuss the number of in-home services or other case types to be included in the sample and the impact on site selection.
10. Answer the State staff's questions.

11. Discuss actions that should be taken before the next conference call.

Between conference calls 2 and 3, the following will take place:

1. The ACF Regional Office will provide support to the State staff as they develop their Statewide Assessment (3 to 6 months before the onsite review) and will help them identify needs for technical assistance during this process.
2. The State staff will submit a summary of the State policies relevant to the reviews, including how the State handles cases referred for an alternative response, to the ACF Regional Office staff and the Child Welfare Review Project.
3. The Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff on the Federal Review Team will be identified.
4. When review sites have been selected, the State will provide to the ACF Regional Office staff a listing of the in-home services cases, which then will be forwarded to the Children's Bureau for review for sample selection, along with information on the sites from which the sample was selected.
5. The ACF Regional Office staff may schedule interim calls to discuss data issues and ongoing review planning.

Conference Call Number 3

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule this call at least 4 months before the onsite review. During this call, the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Summarize the key discussion points from any interim calls that have taken place since the last full conference call.
2. Discuss the overall review planning process, including the ongoing Statewide Assessment, data issues, the involvement of external representatives, and emerging issues. Remind the State to begin finalizing the list of State Review Team members.
3. Discuss how the State will build on their PIP for the Statewide Assessment.
4. Discuss the automation process and how the instruments will be completed using tablet computers. Discuss with the State any logistical arrangements that may be needed to accommodate the automation process (e.g., a room with electrical outlets, power strips, etc.)
5. Discuss the State Team Training, and schedule a date, time, and location for training the State Review Team members.

6. Discuss the potential for needing additional Federal Review Team members (particularly with small State agencies that may not be able to provide as many State staff as required to conduct the case record reviews and interviews).
7. Answer the State staff's questions.
8. Discuss actions that should be taken before the next conference call.

Between conference calls 3 and 4, the following will take place:

1. The State will provide the ACF Regional Office staff with a draft of the Statewide Assessment (3 months before the onsite review).
2. The ACF Regional Office staff will circulate the draft Statewide Assessment to the Team Leaders for review and comment, and provide the State with feedback.
3. The State staff will return their completed Statewide Assessment to the ACF Regional Office for approval (2 months before the onsite review); the ACF Regional Office will remind the State that the final Statewide Assessment will serve as the foundation for PIP planning, as needed.
4. The Child Welfare Review Project will provide the ACF Regional Office staff a list of consultants from which to select individuals to supplement the Federal Review Team (2 months before the onsite review).
5. The ACF Regional Office will select consultants from the list provided by the Child Welfare Review Project and will alert the project by e-mail about the consultants selected.
6. The Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office will work with the State staff to select the local sites to be reviewed, if not already finalized.
7. The Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office will work with the State staff to determine the composition of the case sample.
8. The Children's Bureau staff will select a sample of 150 foster care cases from the State's AFCARS data for the period under review (or from another source approved by the ACF Regional Office) and 150 in-home services cases from the list provided by the State.
9. The Children's Bureau will remind the State about the cross-State participants who may participate in the State's onsite review.

Conference Call Number 4

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule this call approximately 2 months before the onsite review. During this call, the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Summarize the key discussion points from any interim calls that have taken place since the last full conference call.
2. Discuss the onsite review schedules and process, including local team management and operation, and the debriefing process.
3. Discuss the stakeholder interviews to be scheduled, particularly with regard to decisions about which State agency personnel will be interviewed.
4. Ask the State to submit a list of the State Review Team members to the Child Welfare Review Project.
5. Provide time for the Child Welfare Review Project staff to discuss review planning arrangements, such as hotel selection and transportation, and ask the State to provide the Child Welfare Review Project staff with contact information for the local sites and recommendations for hotels in the two local sites not previously identified.
6. Answer the State staff's questions.
7. Determine what the State's technical assistance needs are with regard to PIP planning.
8. Discuss actions that should be taken before the next conference call.

Between conference calls 4 and 5, the following will take place:

1. The Child Welfare Review Project will forward the list of consultant reviewers to the State, with a copy to the ACF Regional Office, for the State to examine for possible conflicts of interest. The State will confirm with the project that the list does not contain consultants who have a conflict of interest with the State.
2. The Child Welfare Review Project will confirm the consultants' availability and provide this information to the ACF Regional Office staff.
3. The ACF Regional Office staff will work with the State to prepare team pairings, and will provide the Child Welfare Review Project staff with site assignments for the Federal Review Team and the cross-State participants.
4. The State will submit to the Child Welfare Review Project the State team chart.

5. The Child Welfare Review Project will contact the hotels recommended by the State to inquire about sleeping room availability. Once hotel space has been identified, the Child Welfare Review Project will send information about the hotels by e-mail to the Federal staff participating in the review and the State Team Leader. The Child Welfare Review Project will reserve hotel sleeping rooms for Federal staff. Because the Child Welfare Review Project may not pay for rooms for Federal employees, Federal staff will be asked to provide the hotel with a credit card upon check-in. The State will book and pay for hotel rooms for the State staff.
6. The Child Welfare Review Project will arrange for consultant travel and hotel accommodations.
7. The ACF Regional Office staff will prepare and submit to the Children's Bureau and the Child Welfare Review Project the Preliminary Assessment (summary of the Statewide Assessment on the Summary of Findings Form) and the full Statewide Assessment (1 month before the onsite review).
8. The Children's Bureau data staff will transmit the case sample list to the ACF Regional Office staff, who then will forward it to the State.
9. The State will identify a sample of 65 cases (comprised of 40 foster care cases and 25 in-home services cases) from the total sample list of 150 foster care cases and 150 in-home services cases and begin to schedule the case-specific and stakeholder interviews.
10. The State will set up the State and local stakeholder interviews.
11. The ACF Regional Office staff will submit to the Child Welfare Review Project the final review schedules (including interviews) and the contact information for each local site.
12. The Child Welfare Review Project will prepare the Review Information Packages (the packages will contain the Preliminary Assessment on the Summary of Findings Form, Statewide Assessment, summary of relevant State policies, list of Federal and State Review Team members, and review schedules) for distribution to the Federal and State Review Team members.

Conference Call Number 5

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office and Central Office staff to schedule this call approximately 1 month before the onsite review. During this call, the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Summarize the key discussion points from any interim calls that have taken place since the last full conference call.

2. Facilitate a discussion of the approved Statewide Assessment and the State's plans for using the information gathered to prepare for the onsite review and the PIP, using the following questions:
 - a. What are the key strengths and areas needing improvement identified by the Statewide Assessment, and what will the State need to explore during the onsite review (or through other means) to be able to develop strategies for building on or addressing those?
 - b. What will/might happen between the Statewide Assessment and the onsite review to affect those areas (for example, changes in elected leadership or new initiatives)?
 - c. Which individuals and organizations need to be involved in the PIP development, implementation, and monitoring processes?
 - d. Set a preliminary schedule for reviewing PIP interim drafts.
3. Discuss issues that may arise during the State Team Training.
4. Discuss the final review schedule and make adjustments as necessary. Ensure that at least 30 minutes is provided for a brief explanatory meeting to take place at each local site before the case record review begins; schedule the initial case record reviews to be conducted before the interviews.
5. Ensure that the State has prepared review schedules and that they are ready for submission to the ACF Regional Office before the onsite review.
6. Ask the State to discuss the list of stakeholder interviews to be included in the review.
7. Explain that the Children's Bureau will permit a State representative who does not supervise any cases being reviewed at the site to observe the local site evening debriefings. Emphasize that this representative may not participate in the debriefings, and will be asked to leave if he or she attempts to interfere with the review team ratings or debriefings of the cases.
8. Explain the following revised procedures for the debriefings and exit conferences:
 - a. After the local site debriefings and exit conferences on Thursday, the consultant reviewers will be dismissed.
 - b. The Local Site Leaders, including the State Local Site Leader, will represent the local site team at the Friday debriefing and exit conference.
 - c. Attendance of State reviewers at the Friday debriefing and exit conference is no longer required but is at the option of the State.

- d. The State may invite key program and administrative staff to observe the Thursday and Friday debriefings and exit conferences.
9. Confirm the location (either the hotel or local site office) to which the Child Welfare Review Project should forward the review materials and equipment to the Local Site Leader.
10. Provide time for the Child Welfare Review Project to discuss the final logistical review planning process, including any transportation issues.
11. Answer the State staff's questions.
12. Discuss actions that should be taken before the onsite review.

Between conference call 5 and the onsite review, the following will take place:

1. The State Team Training Project will conduct a pre-training call with the ACF and State Leads for the review.
2. The State Team Training staff will train the State Review Team members on the review procedures, instruments, and automation process.
3. The State Team Training Project will submit to the Children's Bureau a summary of issues that arose at the training.
4. The State staff will appoint the members of the PIP Development Team, if the team has not already been established.
5. The State staff will analyze the results of the Statewide Assessment to determine those areas about which they have sufficient information to begin planning for the PIP and those areas about which they would like to gather additional information during the onsite review. The members of the Statewide Assessment Team who also will serve on the PIP Development Team will meet with the other PIP Team members to begin planning the PIP.
6. The Child Welfare Review Project will contact the ACF Regional Office staff 1 week before the review to ensure that all arrangements have been completed.

Conference Calls Number 6, 7, and 8: PIP Development Planning

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule the three PIP calls after the completion of the onsite review.

Conference Call 6: PIP

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office

staff to schedule this call within 2 weeks after the onsite review. During the call, the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Review the key findings of the onsite review, and discuss the timeline for transmitting the Final Report to the State.
2. Provide an overview of the roles of the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office in providing support to, and oversight of, the State's PIP process.
3. Provide an overview of successful PIP development/implementation strategies.
4. Describe the key elements of the PIP document and the key characteristics of a "model" PIP.
5. Discuss effective PIP strategies implemented by other States to address the items and systemic factors that the State is likely to be required to include in the PIP.
6. Ask the State to discuss their plans for developing/finalizing the PIP.
7. Check whether there are data issues, related to the revised data profile, that the State would like to discuss or needs assistance in addressing.
8. Discuss the State's technical assistance needs and the process for accessing CB-funded technical assistance.
9. Discuss expectations for quarterly reporting, provide guidance on effective methods for evaluating and reporting on PIP progress, and answer State questions about the PIP development, reporting, and monitoring process.
10. Discuss the process for scheduling the next PIP conference call and discuss the upcoming PIP training (the NRC for Organizational Improvement will participate in this call).

Between conference calls 6 and 7, the following will take place:

1. The ACF Regional Office staff will complete and transmit to the State the Final Report.
2. The State will begin developing the PIP, continually assessing the types of technical assistance needed, if any.

Conference Call Number 7: PIP

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule this call within 2 weeks to 1 month of the release of the courtesy copy of the Final Report. During this conference call, the Children's Bureau and the ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Discuss the review findings as presented in the Final Report.
2. Facilitate a discussion of the PIP development process, using the following questions, and providing clarification and guidance regarding the issues discussed, as appropriate.
 - a. What is the State's strategy for reviewing the Final Report and developing/finalizing the PIP?
 - b. How will that strategy create lasting and systemic statewide change while also addressing immediate needs?
 - c. How will the State link the PIP development process to the State's collaborative planning process for developing the 5-year Child and Family Services Plan? Does the State need further guidance in determining how to most effectively incorporate the PIP into ongoing planning and reform efforts at the State and local levels?
 - d. What is the State's plan for engaging its external partners in developing, implementing, and evaluating the PIP?
 - e. How will the State ensure that the program improvements are made statewide (even if they are tested initially in one jurisdiction)?
 - f. How will the State address issues in its largest metropolitan site?
 - g. How will the State use the PIP process to develop or enhance its quality assurance system?
 - h. What types of challenges does the State anticipate experiencing during the PIP development, implementation, and evaluation process, and how might those be addressed through technical assistance?
 - i. What other types of technical assistance does the State anticipate needing during the PIP process?
 - j. Are there continuing data issues that the State would like to discuss or needs assistance in addressing (for example, a revised data profile)?
 - k. Is the State on schedule for submitting interim and final PIP drafts, and if not, what type of assistance will they need to be able to meet the PIP timelines?

1. How will the State share information with others (for example, elected officials or the media) about the Final Report and the PIP process?

Between conference calls 7 and 8, the following will take place:

1. The State will finish and submit the draft PIP to the ACF Regional Office.
2. The ACF Regional Office staff will review the draft PIP, consult with the Children's Bureau, and provide the State with feedback on the draft PIP.
3. The State will continue to identify technical assistance needs and contact the ACF Regional Office staff, as appropriate.
4. The ACF Regional Office staff will provide ongoing support to the State during PIP development and will alert the Children's Bureau if the State is facing significant challenges in finalizing the PIP.
5. The Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will determine whether the State could benefit from onsite assistance during the PIP development/finalization process and then coordinate with the Child Welfare Review Project to provide consultant support, as needed.

Conference Call Number 8: PIP

The Child Welfare Review Project will work with the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff to schedule this call on the basis of the need to provide further guidance to the State about their PIP, typically after receipt of the draft PIP. During this call, the Children's Bureau and ACF Regional Office staff will:

1. Provide feedback on the most recent draft of the PIP (close to final).
2. Discuss areas of concern that should be addressed by the State before submitting the final PIP, and provide guidance on how the State might do so.
3. Discuss next steps in the State's PIP implementation process and quarterly reporting process.
4. Provide an overview of the Children's Bureau's and ACF Regional Office's role in monitoring PIP progress.

5. Schedule a call between the ACF Regional Office and the State approximately 2 months after the PIP has been approved, during which the Regional Office can facilitate a discussion about PIP implementation issues and technical assistance needs, using the following questions:
 - a. What is working well about the PIP implementation process and why?
 - b. What are the challenges associated with implementing the PIP, and how is the State addressing those?
 - c. How might those be addressed through technical assistance?
 - d. How are the agency's plans to review, analyze, and report on the quarterly PIP findings working?
 - e. What, if any, are the preliminary changes resulting from the PIP?